



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Gallatin National Forest

Supervisor's Office
10 East Babcock
P.O. Box 130
Bozeman, MT 59771

File Code: 1920/5100

Date: May 5, 2011

Subject: **Forest Plan Amendment for Fire Management**

REPLY DUE JUNE 06, 2011

Dear Interested Party:

The Gallatin National Forest has conducted an environmental analysis to evaluate the effects of updating the 1987 Forest Plan fire management direction for unplanned wildland fire. The purpose and need for this EA is to amend the 1987 Forest Plan direction, standards and guidelines pertaining to the management of unplanned wildland fire so as to meet current Federal Fire management policies. The proposed amendment would apply on National Forest System lands located within the Gallatin National Forest.

The analysis was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, and the Gallatin National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1987). Two alternatives are considered in detail: Alternative 1 (no action) and Alternative 2 (proposed action). Under Alternative 1, current Forest Plan direction would continue to guide the management of unplanned wildland fire with emphasis on fire suppression for most management areas outside designated wilderness areas. Conversely, Alternative 2 (the proposed amendment) would allow consideration of a wide spectrum of fire management strategies across National Forest System lands within the Gallatin National Forest. Alternative 2 would also remove or modify current Forest Plan direction to reflect new terminology and updated Federal fire policy. Two additional alternatives are discussed, but not analyzed in detail. The information and analysis in this document will be used to determine whether to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) (40 CFR 1508.9).

The Forest invites you to review the environmental assessment and provide comments by June 6, 2011. The Gallatin National Forest will consider all public comments before making a decision. In submitting comments, please provide specific facts along with supporting reasons that you believe should be considered by the Responsible Official in reaching a decision. Comments may be submitted in writing, orally, or through electronic means.

Please return your written comments to:

Forest Supervisor
Attn: FP Fire Mgt. Amendment
Gallatin National Forest
PO Box 130, Bozeman, MT 59771

Electronic comments may be submitted to comments-northern-gallatin@fs.fed.us (insert "FP Fire Mgt. Amendment" in the subject line). Acceptable formats are MS Word, Word Perfect, or RTF. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated



electronic acknowledgement form the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Written comments must be postmarked by the Postal Service, e-mailed, faxed, or otherwise submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice. Hand delivered comments must be time and date imprinted at the correct Responsible Official's office (Gallatin National Forest Supervisor's Office) by the close of business on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice.

Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business (8:00 am - 4:30 pm) hours via telephone or in person, or if during non-business hours, must be at an official agency function (such as a public meeting), which is designed to elicit public comment.

In order to retain your administrative appeal rights, you must provide comments during this 30-day comment period. The legal notice was published in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle newspaper of record on May 5, 2011. The comment period will start on the day following publication of the legal notice and ends 30 days following the date of publication. Your comments must be postmarked by the end of the 30-day comment period. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. To request a paper copy or CD of the EA, contact Julie Shea at (406) 587-6706.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mary C. Erickson
MARY C. ERICKSON
Forest Supervisor